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ABSTRACT

Methods for integrating Christian values into social studies education in Catholic schools are examined. First, the four areas in which learning takes place are discussed: the psychomotor, the cognitive which includes interpretive and analytical skills, the intellectual, and the attitudinal. Next, the author presents four values which should be integrated into the content of a Catholic social studies program: a sense of self-worth, charity, responsibility, and principles. Procedures for determining that these values are taught conclude the document. A teacher begins at the start of the school year by formulating teaching/learning experiences to help students grow in these areas. Five questions should be answered when planning social studies lessons: What specific content will the students learn? What skills will the student practice to obtain this information? Is the content value laden and can the students draw specific attitudes from it? What variety of learning experiences will the students involve themselves in? How will students demonstrate their learnings? (KC)

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CHRISTIAN VALUES AND SOCIAL STUDIES:

A REDUNDANT TITLE?

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CHRISTIAN VALUES AND SOCIAL STUDIES:

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Some of the reading I have done during the year clearly indicate that social studies education is in a period of change. This was vividly reflected in November at the annual meeting of the National Council of Social Studies educators in Houston. Little argument was voiced on what should be taught or how it should be taught.

Social studies education like many aspects of our society is experiencing difficulty brought about by transition. The following eight points are presented to document this difficulty for classroom teachers.

- (1) The National Assessment of Educated Progress revealed that social studies achievement during the last four years has continued to drop.
- (2) An international assessment showed that American students rank lowest in knowledge of the political system.
- (3) Money for materials and equipment in social studies is being transferred to "basics".
- (4) The time allotted for social studies education is being cut back so more time can be given to basics. Many principals have suggested this to me as a way of bolstering a sagging reading program.
- (5) One of the speakers at the NCSS said, "Social studies today is

irrelevant to the world we live in and suffers from a cultural lag."

Another said, "We need to leave out the Greeks and Romans and concentrate on today's world." The National Science Foundation has funded and the Social Science Education Consortium has sponsored a two year project to answer the question, "What is Social Studies?"

(6) The 1960's saw the advent of ethnic studies. These were quickly transformed in the 1970's to multi-cultural studies. Today the whole conception is questioned. I have read a report which a person is quoted as saying, "Too much awareness of ethnic differences only sows the seed of widespread social problems."

(7) From Dupont Circle in Washington to the school office in diocese after diocese across the country, to the schools, and finally to the individual teacher the message has been sent, "Teach Peace and Justice studies." The harried teacher simply responds, "What, How, When?"

And I need not recall to your minds that social studies has also been bombarded by a bewildering array of other education movements. Among these are career education, consumer education, moral development, law related studies, folklore studies, etc., etc., etc.

(8) The final element in this period of transition is one of non-change. Foremost, as we stand on the threshold of the 21st Century, is the fact that teaching methods have not changed. At this moment, of all the social studies classes being taught:

the lecture-recitation method is being used in 80% of the

classrooms,

the textbook is the teaching medium in 90% of the schools and 2/3 are merely reading it in round robin fashion,

and finally 75% of the teachers are emphasizing content rather than skills.

If this last picture is somewhat disheartening take courage, for I said "at the moment" these events were happening. Our Catholic schools are closed this week, so they are not included in this. I trust that social studies education in our schools is radically different.

What has all of this to do with the integration of Christian values into social education? I believe these social studies concerns touch the very heart of Catholic education. As teachers in Catholic schools we must answer three basic questions:

What is our school about?

What is to be learned?

How is it to be communicated?

The first question, "What is our school about" is the most crucial. Most of us are teaching in schools that were founded twenty years or more ago and come out of the Catholic tradition of another generation. Therefore, at the start of the school year a faculty must sit down and ask themselves, "Why does this school exist?" Input from parents and parishioners and students would be most helpful. This question cannot be answered in theoretical terms, it must be answered specifically for the student population that attends the

school. A better way to phrase the question is "How will the children be different in June from what they currently are?" I ask you to take a sheet of paper and write a picture for me of how you expect your students to be in June other than they are now. Be as specific as you can and clearly indicate all the changes.

PAUSE FOR 2 MINUTES

I have done this exercise with countless schools in the New York area asking the faculties to paint a picture of how the graduate differed from the first grader. Usually the whole front board and side board would be filled with details. First grade teachers, second grade, third and all the way up the line frequently saw for the first time the common thread that linked them all together. As Catholic educators we have said over and over that our schools are value oriented. Therefore, what you have written should indicate a decided difference in students' value systems at the end of each school year.

This leads directly to a consideration of the second question, "What is to be learned?" The answer to this must be generated in light of the response given to the first question. Learning takes place in four areas. The psychomotor - the children learn to control and use their bodies to acquire and express information. This begins at birth and continues throughout adolescence. The physical education programs of the school fosters this development. As social

studies teachers we should be keenly aware of those students in our classes who more easily express themselves through the creation of a diorama, or participation in some creative dramatics, or role playing or simulation. At the same time, we realize that these pupils may not learn merely through an audio-visual approach. So we have a variety of teaching tactics to physically involve these students in the lesson so they may learn through their kinesthetic modelity.

A second area in which learning takes place is knowledge. This means that there are certain facts and concepts that can be remembered. Although Bloom in his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in the Cognitive Domain indicates knowledge as the lowest level of understanding, it is the most fundamental. Higher types of learning merely involve the manipulation of this knowledge and the association of new knowledge with previously acquired knowledge. This takes us to the very heart of a school's scope and sequence. Of the millions of facts that exist in the world of social studies what are the few fundamental concepts and ideas that students who leave our schools must know? As social scientists, we are very mindful that today what is accepted as a fact may be disproven tomorrow because of further information obtained. I would not expect a student graduating from my school to know all the names of the presidents and the dates of their terms or the names and capitals of the fifty states. However, the graduates should know the names of our present president and

realize the role that people like Washington, Lincoln, Wilson and Roosevelt played in our country and these pupils should know that the union is formed of states, and within and cutting across these states are valleys, rivers, great plains, mountains and megalopolises. The facts that we demand students learn subconsciously communicate to them our values. The indiscriminate assigning of facts to be memorized tells students that we have no priorities or values.

The third area of learning is closely associated with knowledge but it is distinctly different. It is the acquisition of the skills of learning, those mental processes that enable a pupil to become a self-learner. Our aim as teachers is to put ourselves out of business, for it is then that our students have become self-educators. More than any other area, social studies demands the teaching/learning of skills. A very sobering thought, our first grade students will be 28 years old in the year 2000, this year's graduates will be 36 years old. The world has changed radically in the last 22 years. All indicators point to continued rapid change in the world. This signals the necessity for insuring that the students have the necessary skills to function in this ever changing world. The social studies teacher, therefore, places great emphasis on the skills of critical thinking. Among these skills detailed in the schools' syllabus are: determining fact from fiction, analyzing a work for the various propaganda techniques used; discovering the

source of the information; recognizing slanted writing, and the connotation of words; discovering the meaning of a word from its context; drawing conclusions or generalizations from a series of facts; identifying the point of view of an article; taking notes; interpreting political cartoons; gathering information from the library; etc.

The teacher selects content which will teach, and reinforce these skills. In almost every area it is more important for the student to learn the skill than it is to know the content. Skills are more difficult to teach than content. If I want my students to learn facts, I can approach them in two ways. I can tell them the facts and say to them, "Here they are, memorize them." Paulo Frier in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed refers to this as the banking system of education. The teacher has knowledge and takes it out and gives it to the student. This method will result in immediate results but will last only as long as the student can recall the facts.

Another way of teaching facts is to provide students with the intellectual tools to acquire the facts. Here the teacher trains the students to recognize a cause/effect or comparison/contrast relationship. The emphasis is on the students acquiring the thinking skill. The instructor then provides the pupils with a problem. The solution to the problem is the acquisition of the desired information. The

children prove they have mastered the skill by coming up with the expected facts. The learners have achieved not only the information, but their depth of understanding of the concepts is more intensified because they were intimately involved in its learning, and more important the youngsters now possess a learning skill that will help them throughout life. If we as social studies teachers are not placing a high priority on helping students acquire the intellectual skills, we are most unchristian and we can never integrate Christian principles into our social studies. There is nothing more basic than thinking skills. When we discuss basics we must include the critical thinking skills needed to process social studies information.

The last area in which learning can take place is in the area of attitudes. What is the purpose of teaching social studies if it is not to foster attitudes of concern in our students for their fellow human beings? If our teaching of social studies is merely cognitive and does not extend into this affective domain, we are making a sham of our Catholic school philosophy which clearly states we are to educate the whole child. A first grade teacher examining community helpers with the class who does not instill in the pupils a sense of real responsibility to one's neighborhood and does not lead those students to the conviction that throwing papers on the school yard grounds is an affront to their neighbor has taught only half the lesson. A fourth grade teacher examining biographies of

famous Americans with the class who does not challenge each student to accept responsibility whether it be as a patrol person or as one involved in a campaign to beautify the neighborhood has taught only half the lesson. An eighth grade teacher examining the United States' relations with other countries who does not encourage students to write to their state and federal representative about their actions which either support or deny Christian principles has only taught half the lesson.

I would like now to propose four values which I believe no child should complete a Catholic school social studies program without having acquired and grown in these.

The first is a sense of self-worth which is the basis for all later value development. Much is being said in this Year of the Child of the battered child. Sometimes children are physically battered, at other times emotionally battered. There are many students in our schools who have a poor self-concept. Battered may be too strong a word but many of them have an injured self-concept. What am I doing to those students whom I failed in social studies? Was it really their failure or did I not adapt my instruction to their needs? Through the study of biographies students can be led to see that our world was made by significant contributions from people from all walks of life. Some are famous, others not even their names are known. By varying my requirements of students, I allow a child to

find his way of expressing himself. Having found it he will begin to experience success and enjoy a sense of accomplishment. As teachers we should try to have a personal contact each day with our students. Social studies bring youth into touch with the whole world. But that world begins with a contact made by two individuals.

Once students appreciate their own dignity, they can begin to look outside of themselves. Now as teacher we pose to them the second value, charity. You will notice I have skipped justice. The human value may be justice, the Christian value is charity. As teachers we help our students see there are obligations more than those associated with justice. The world we live in today is a contract world. I will do only A, B, and C, in exchange you must give me only 1, 2, and 3. If it is not written down no contract exists. Some of you may have been involved in a strike which came about as a misunderstanding of a point in a contract. Because of this emphasis on contract, no one asks what may I do for you? The concept of covenant in the Bible is lost. The Jews and God made a very open-ended promise. The Jews said "We will be your people" and God said "I will be your God." No string of subordinate clauses were needed. It was a simple statement of respect for each other. As the two lived together, the details would be filled in.

This is the concept of charity that students need to be exposed.

to. As members of the human race we are dependent on one another. This is frequently much easier when discussing people in far off countries than it is when considering the family from another racial background who just moved in down the block. An old saying goes, "Charity begins at home." We have not taught it that way, we have probably spent more time collecting monies for the foreign missions than we have to take care of the poor in our own schools. I am not saying we should not support the missions, but subconsciously we may have taught our pupils that this was more important than kindness to our neighbors. Every grade level provides abundant opportunities for showing how charitable men and women responded to needs in all cultures. We use these examples to make charity meaningful to pupils today.

From a sense of charity flows the third value and that is a sense of responsibility. A sense of responsibility for others will only grow out of a sense of personal responsibility. One of the occupational diseases teachers suffer is called "It gotta be covered." In our desire to complete a year's syllabus, we have espoused means which are counter productive in the long run. The "It gotta be covered" syndrome says the students must have these facts. The easiest way is to tell them, so I will do that. The long range goal of making the students responsible for their own learning suffers.

The more we place the burden for learning on the students the more the pupils grow in self-responsibility. Once pupils accept responsibility for themselves then they can begin to accept responsibility for others. American history is filled with examples of instances when our country accepted responsibility for other less fortunate nations, sometimes from Christian motives at other times for pure economic gain. Discussion of these cases can be very fruitful. From this global involvement it is quite easy to move to personal responsibility.

The final value I believe our students should acquire as a result of our social studies programs in Catholic schools is that they are a principaled persons. They are students who form judgments based on principles and values not merely on whim and fancy. This is really the embodiment of all the values and is most difficult for teenagers and youngsters because of peer pressure. My consolation to you is that we have eight or nine years to get students to arrive at this point. Simulations and role playing activities are most helpful in demonstrating to pupils how they have integrated these values. Giving students increasing responsibility enables them to act out of principled motives.

I have emphasized that as social studies teachers our chief concern rests in training our students in the skills of learning so they will grasp the content on their own and question what the content means to them on a level of values.

I would like to now address the last question, "How are values to be communicated?" The key element in this process is myself, the teacher. Someone has said that a value is caught just the same way the common cold is - that is, by being effectively exposed to it. Although we may laugh, isn't being effectively exposed to something excellent teaching methodology? The message that I must communicate is that I am a competent person and that I myself operate out of a system of values. If I am concerned about Christian values, the highest form of Christianity that I can practice is to be an excellent teacher. My responsibility as a teacher is to "learn" those students in the areas I previously mentioned. This means that I have a clear plan of the year's instruction and that my daily lessons are prepared and involve a variety of instructional techniques.

The pastoral "To Teach as Jesus Did" makes a most important statement regarding the role teachers play in communicating values. It says:

"This integration of religious truth and values with the rest of life is brought about in the Catholic school not only by its unique curriculum but, more importantly, by the presence of teachers who

express an integrated approach to learning and living in their private and professional lives (page 104)."

In the lead article from the newsletter from the National Center for Justice and Peace Education for January, the little phrase appears "Adults learn best from each other." This is most applicable to growth in values. As a Catholic school we take pride in the fact that we are value centered schools. Yet how much time do we spend making ourselves better value communicators? Wouldn't our faculty meetings be more productive if we as a group of adults talked about what it means to be charitable in 1979, or how do we show concern for others or why do we value respect. Through such discussion will I intensify my own values and thinking, better enabling me to communicate them. Some teachers may feel that such discussions are not closely enough related to the teaching/learning scene. Yet all of us from personal experience, and educational research supports this, know that it is not the content that teachers communicated to us that affected us, but rather it is their concern, justice, charity, that touched us deeply.

Can these values be taught?

I believe they can and I feel it is a cop out when we say they can't be taught.

To help our students acquire the values and attitudes we must prepare the environment of the classroom. An integral part of the

school's curriculum is the list of those values which students are to acquire as a result of the school's planned learning program. If you will go back and look at what you wrote to the question I posed to you early in this session, I suspect that the vast majority of items you wrote were value laden. This demonstrates the need for teaching values. At the start of the school year the teacher examines the school's scope and sequence and determines those handful of values that the students are to develop this year. The actual teaching/learning experiences are programmed to help students to grow in these areas.

A sixth grade teacher in New York teaches civilization of the western hemisphere. The course content is "Adam to Jimmy". As a result of this course the instructor may determine that the students are to acquire an awareness of the needs of others. One of the first topics covered is that people came together to live in clans and tribes because they had needs which could not be met alone. This leads to a discussion of loneliness. The educator follows this up by merely suggesting that the class write letters to the people in the retirement home in the parish. Later on we examine the middle ages and the development of religious orders which served the human needs of people whether in hospitals, slave ships, schools or on local farms. We cite similar examples in the modern world, Mother Theresa caring for the poor of India, Father Bruce Ritter helping

the runaways in New York, the workers in Calvary Hospital across the land who care for terminally ill cancer patients, or priests in remote parts of our land. Again the students are encouraged to write a letter merely saying they admire these people and will pray for them. Finally, we study the exploration of the New World and the exploitation of the native population. We relate this to a proposal being made to deny benefits to parents in non-public schools or to external services. The students now write letters protesting their exploitation and demanding equal rights. You will notice that during the course of the year the teacher has highlighted the fact that people have responded to the needs of others. The class was shown that today people are doing the same thing. A simple way of responding is to write a short note of concern. Has the educator taught the attitude? Yes, because the class was presented repeatedly with a concrete behavior which expressed the attitude. The instructor can determine if the students have acquired the attitudes by observing if the behavior is practiced.

In order to tie all that I said together, I propose six questions a teacher should answer when planning a social studies lessons.

(1) What specific content are the students to learn today?

I emphasize here the word "specific." Sometimes I am afraid that we teachers go into the classroom with a shotgun and like the explosion from the shotgun our teaching is all over the

topic. Rather our teaching should be structured to one or two clearly stated points. I call your attention to the use of behavioral objectives which can help give more precise direction to the lesson.

(2) The second question I ask is, "What skill or skills will the students practice in order to obtain this information?"

Sometimes this will be critically listening to my lecture, other times analyzing a film or filmstrip presentation, and on another occasion it may be evaluating a television show. I suspect most often it will be critically reading a textbook. Every lesson uses some skill appropriate to the level of the children. In the primary grades I may ask the students to react to the presentations on what our neighborhood was like 50 years ago, made by a classmate, the man in the candy store who has been here for 20 years or the senior citizen who lived here all her life. On an upper grade level I ask the students to compare what is contained in an autobiography with what is in a critical biography.

(3) Third, I ask myself, "Is the content value laden and can the students draw specific attitudes from it?"

I do not wish to give the impression that every lesson must result in some value formation. Such an approach could lead to a preachy class. This would be destructive of the whole approach to value formation which places the burden for value development on the

child. The other extreme needs to be also avoided. In this approach no effort is made to bring students into contact with values. We have seen that Social Studies offers many situations from which the teacher can help values flow to the students.

(4) A fourth question to be asked is, "What variety of learning experiences will the students involve themselves in?"

The competent teacher knows that not all students learn the same way. Some place greater emphasis on the auditory channel, others the visual mode and still others need to be completely physically involved in the lesson. The textbook will not help every child in the class. A variety of learning materials is required. The teacher will structure the lesson to involve as many of these different modes as possible.

(5) Lastly the teacher must ask, "How will the students demonstrate their learnings?"

This indicates to the teacher if the material has been mastered and further supplies the needed information as to what should be covered in the next lesson.

The famous fresco of Michaelangelo in the Sistine Chapel depicts the creator of the human race. In it God the Father has his arm stretched out full length toward Adam. Adam has his arm stretched out full length toward God. When their fingers touched, the life of God flowed into the human race. I like that painting for I think it

depicts very well what we as teachers are about. We must go our full limit and touch children.

On the other hand we must challenge students to stretch themselves to their full limit. In this dynamic tension learning takes place. For from us flows ideas, the learning skills and values to our students who in turn will come up with their own concept of social studies grounded on Christian values.